



**TESTIMONY OF ERIN KEMPLE
IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 5204
AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND
FAIR SHARE PLANS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO INCREASE
AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Members of the Housing Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 5204. I am the executive director of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, a statewide organization whose mission is to ensure that all Connecticut residents have access to the housing of their choice, free from discrimination. My testimony today will address the impact of this bill on Connecticut's residents of color as well as on families with children and people with disabilities.

Certain groups in Connecticut face disproportionately high levels of segregation and are disproportionately lower income. These groups are Blacks, Latinos, people with disabilities, and people with a lawful source of income other than from employment. Single-parent families are also a lower-income and growing demographic, though less segregated. The Connecticut Fair Housing Center supports this bill because it is designed to gather accurate up-to-date information about the number of affordable units that are needed to house these vulnerable populations as well as to ensure that even Connecticut's poorest citizens have the choice of where to live.

Currently, many elected leaders and their constituents want local control over where housing is located, which types of units are permitted (e.g., homeownership v. residential), neighborhood density, and lot size (the number of units per acre) even if that local control leads to further segregation. Over and over again as the result of local control, communities have prevented new affordable housing from being built because it does not fit the character of the

neighborhood or the municipality has no suitable lots for building or our citizens do not need affordable housing. This bill recognizes that local control has resulted in hyper segregation with almost 73% (72.6%) of Connecticut citizens who identify as non-white living in only 22 municipalities, or in only 13% of Connecticut's towns.¹

Passing this bill means acknowledging that too many Connecticut residents reside in a homeless shelter or live just one paycheck away from losing their homes because housing is unaffordable. It means recognizing that placing affordable housing in just a few municipalities limits the choice of where to live, find a job, access educational opportunities, and shop for fresh food for too many people. Passage of this bill will mean that Connecticut finally admits there is a need for additional affordable housing and that the need must be met not by a few communities, but by every community in Connecticut. By establishing data-driven metrics which inform the debate on the number and placement of affordable units, Connecticut will have a yardstick by which to measure its progress toward ensuring that all of its citizens have safe, affordable, and decent housing while at the same time overturning nearly 100 years of federal, state, and local decisions which created the segregated communities we see today.

¹ 37.6% of people of color live in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Waterbury, and Stamford.